

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

1. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Sounik et al. (US 2004/0242798) teach a process of producing a purified polymer solution (abstract). In the process of Sounik et al. the polymerization step produces a solution of the polymer in an alcohol and the polymer solution is subjected to purification (par.0021).

The process of Sounik et al. does not include the step (1) of dissolving a solid product comprising a resist polymer in a solvent (b) comprising one or more solvents selected from the group consisting of acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, tetrahydrofuran, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether and ethyl acetate of claim 17 of the instant application.

Zampini et al. (US Patent 5,939,511) teach the purification of novolak resins (abstract, column 3, line 64-column 4, line 11) but fail to teach the process of producing a purified resist polymer solution, wherein the resist polymer comprises a repeating unit decomposable by, and becoming alkali-soluble by, the action of an acid and a repeating unit containing a polar group of claim 17 of the instant application.

There are no prior art teachings that would motivate one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Sounik et al. and Zampini et al. and obtain the process of claim 17 of the instant application.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ANCA EOFF whose telephone number is (571)272-9810. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday, 6:30 AM-4:00 PM, EST and Friday, 6:30-10:30 AM, EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Cynthia H. Kelly can be reached on 571-272-1526. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Anca Eoff/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1722